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STAT

FORD ANNOUNCED the departures of Schlesinger, Colby and Morton.

The President confirmed that he plans to nominate his chief of staff, Donald Rumsfeld, to succeed James Schlesinger as Defense Secretary and to replace CIA Director William Colby with George Bush, who heads the U.S. liaison office in Peking. Although Secretary of State Kissinger will lose his job as national security adviser, it will be taken over by a Kissinger protege, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft. Rogers Morton will resign as Commerce Secretary, and Ford will nominate Ambassador to Britain Elliot Richardson to succeed him.

*The sudden actions removed from the administration Kissinger's two principal foreign-affairs rivals, Schlesinger and Colby.*

Ford denied that personal or policy differences led to Schlesinger's dismissal, asserting that the Pentagon boss fully backed a tentative arms-limitation pact with Russia. The President refused to give his reasons for the shake-up beyond saying that he wanted to install his own "team." Kissinger will continue to have the dominant role in foreign policy, Ford said.

Rumsfeld's chief experience in defense matters was gained during nearly two years as U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Before that, the 43-year-old White House staff coordinator was a Nixon counselor and head of the Cost of Living Council and the Office of Economic Opportunity. As a former Illinois Congressman, he may be better able to deal with Congress at defense-budget time than Schlesinger.

George Bush doesn't have a background in intelligence but has held two of the most sensitive diplomatic posts, Ambassador to the United Nations and envoy to China. Bush, 51, also has been a member of Congress and has headed the GOP National Committee. Both Bush and Rumsfeld are seen as possibilities for the '76 Republican vice presidential nomination.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, rejecting a White House request to keep secret its report on alleged CIA assassination plots, voted to send the report to the full Senate before Thanksgiving.